

Message Text

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FOLLOWING IS REPEAT STATE 313247, SENT SECRETARY 30 DEC 76:

QUOTE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE STATE 313247 TOSEC 340124

FROM SCA WALENTYNOWICZ AND ARA SHLAUDEMAN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, PFOR, MX

SUBJECT: BRIEFING MEMORANDUM: PRESS STATEMENT ON MOTOR
TRAVEL IN MEXICAN STATE OF SINALOA.

1. IN ARA'S BRIEFING MEMORANDUM TO YOU (S/S 762611) OF
DECEMBER 23, WE BROUGHT TO YOUR ATTENTION OUR CONCERN
OVER INCIDENTS INVOLVING US MOTORISTS TRAVELING IN
SINALOA. WE WERE PREPARING TO ISSUE A "TRAVEL ADVISORY"
EXPLAINING THE SITUATION. ON CHRISTMAS DAY, TWO U.S.
CITIZENS WERE MURDERED IN ONE OF THESE INCIDENTS MAKING
IT EVEN MORE URGENT FOR US TO ISSUE A WARNING. OUR
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EMBASSY IN MEXICO CITY RAISED THE SUBJECT WITH THE
FOREIGN MINISTER WHO CONVEYED THE MEXICAN PRESIDENT'S
PERSONAL EXPRESSION OF REGRET FOR THE MURDERS AND HIS
DETERMINATION TO INSTITUTE NEW MEASURES IMMEDIATELY TO
ASSURE TOURISTS' SAFETY.

2. WE NOW PLAN TO ISSUE A STATEMENT AT TOMORROW'S NOON
PRESS BRIEFING IN ORDER TO WARN AMERICAN MOTORISTS OF
THE CURRENT SUBSTANTIAL RISKS INVOLVED IN TRAVEL THROUGH

THE STATE OF SINALOA. WE HAVE SOUGHT IN THE STATEMENT TO GIVE THE GOM FULL CREDIT FOR DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE PROBLEM AND ACTING ON IT. NONETHELESS WE EXPECT NEGATIVE REACTION IN MEXICO TO OUR ISSUANCE OF THE STATEMENT.

3. THE TEXT OF THE STATEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS: "TRAVEL IN THE STATE OF SINALOA, MEXICO. IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR GUIDANCE, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS INFORMED THE AMERICAN AUTOMOBILE ASSOCIATION OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING TOURIST TRAVEL IN THE STATE OF SINALOA, MEXICO. WHILE LARGE NUMBERS OF AMERICANS HAVE SAFE AND ENJOYABLE VACATIONS IN MEXICO AND CAN EXPECT TO CONTINUE TO ENJOY THE TRADITIONAL MEXICAN HOSPITALITY, THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SAFETY OF AMERICAN TOURISTS TRAVELING IN OR THROUGH THE STATE OF SINALOA IN WESTERN MEXICO. THE DEPARTMENT HAS THE RESPONSIBILITY TO ALERT AMERICAN TRAVELERS TO POTENTIAL RISKS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES.

"SINCE MAY 1976 THERE HAVE BEEN APPROXIMATELY 18 INCIDENTS INVOLVING HIGHWAY ROBBERY AND VIOLENT ASSAULT OF AMERICAN TRAVELERS BY ARMED BANDITS MOSTLY ON HIGHWAY 15 NEAR THE CITY OF CULIACAN IN THE STATE OF SINALOA. THE BANDITS HAVE GENERALLY TAKEN ALL OF THE MOTORISTS POSSESSIONS INCLUDING THEIR VEHICLES. TWO MOTORISTS HAVE BEEN REPORTED MISSING. THESE INCIDENTS INCLUDED A MURDER OF A FATHER AND DAUGHTER ON CHRISTMAS DAY ON THE DURANGO-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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MAZATLAN HIGHWAY.

"THESE DEVELOPMENTS HAVE BEEN THE SUBJECT OF DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF MEXICO AND THE UNITED STATES. THE OFFICIALS OF THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT RECENTLY CONVEYED TO UNITED STATES EMBASSY OFFICIALS IN MEXICO CITY THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT'S DETERMINATION TO INSTITUTE NEW MEASURES IMMEDIATELY TO ASSURE TOURISTS SAFE AND PLEASANT TRAVEL. ACCORDING TO THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT THERE WILL BE A NEW AND UNIQUE SYSTEM OF TOURIST PROTECTION AND ASSISTANCE FROM THE BORDER AT NOGALES THROUGH HERMOSILLO TO MAZATLAN. THE FEATURES OF THIS SYSTEM INCLUDE HANDOUTS TO TOURISTS AT THE BORDER INDICATING APPROPRIATE PLACES TO STAY AND HOW TO CONTACT MEXICAN AUTHORITIES FOR ASSISTANCE, AND IMMEDIATE INCREASE OF THE PATROLLING 'GREEN ANGEL' TOURIST ASSISTANCE UNITS FROM 5 TO 15.

"THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE WELCOMES THESE NEW INITIATIVES AND ANTICIPATES THAT THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IN CONTROLLING THIS SITUATION. IN THE MEANTIME WE ADVISE AMERICAN MOTORISTS THAT MOTOR TRAVEL

THROUGH OR IN THE STATE OF SINALOA IN WESTERN MEXICO
ENTAILS SUBSTANTIAL RISKS. IF TRAVEL FOR THE TIME
BEING IN THAT AREA IS UNAVOIDABLE IT IS ADVISABLE TO
HAVE SEVERAL VEHICLES TRAVEL TOGETHER, RESTRICT DRIVING

TO THE PERIOD BETWEEN 10 A.M. TO 3 P.M. AND STAY IN
WELL-KNOWN HOTELS. CAMPING OR RESTING ALONG THE
HIGHWAY IS NOT ADVISABLE. IN VIEW OF THE STEPS THAT
THE MEXICAN GOVERNMENT IS TAKING, THE DEPARTMENT OF
STATE BELIEVES THAT THE SITUATION WILL IMPROVE RAPIDLY."

ROBINSON UNQUOTE. ROBINSON

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